

Platform and Constitution

—OF THE—

Socialist Labor Party

—OF THE—

United States of America.

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PLATFORM.

The Socialist Labor Party of the United States, in Convention assembled, re-asserts the inalienable right of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

With the founders of the American republic we hold that the purpose of government is to secure every citizen in the enjoyment of this right; but in the light of our social conditions we hold, furthermore, that no such right can be exercised under a system of economic inequality, essentially destructive of life, of liberty, and of happiness.

With the founders of this republic we hold that the true theory of politics is that the machinery of government must be owned and controlled by the whole people; but in the light of our industrial development we hold, furthermore, that the true theory of economics is that the machinery of production must likewise belong to the people in common.

To the obvious fact that our despotic system of economics is the direct opposite of our democratic system of politics, can plainly be traced the existence of a privileged class, the corruption of government by that class, the alienation of public property, public franchises and public functions to that class, and the abject dependence of the mightiest of nations upon that class.

Again, through the perversion of democracy to the ends of plutocracy, labor is robbed of the wealth which it alone produces, is denied the means of self-employment, and, by compulsory idleness in wage slavery, is even deprived of the necessities of life.

Human power and natural forces are thus wasted, that the plutocracy may rule.

Ignorance and misery, with all their concomitant evils are perpetuated, that the people may be kept in bondage.

Science and invention are diverted from their humane purpose to the enslavement of women and children.

Against such a system the Socialist Labor Party once more enters its protest. Once more it reiterates its fundamental declaration that private property in the natural sources of production and in the instruments of labor is the obvious cause of all economic servitude and political dependence; and

Whereas, the time is fast coming when, in the natural course of social evolution, this system, through the destructive action of its failures

and crises on the one hand, and the constructive tendencies of its trusts and other capitalistic combinations on the other hand, shall have worked out its own downfall; therefore be it

Resolved, that we call upon the people to organize with a view to the substitution of the co-operative commonwealth for the present state of planless production, industrial war and social disorder; commonwealth in which every worker shall have the free exercise and full benefit of his faculties, multiplied by all the modern factors of civilization.

We call upon them to unite with us in a mighty effort to gain by all practicable means the political power.

In the meantime, and with a view to immediate improvement in the condition of labor, we present the following "Demands".

SOCIAL DEMANDS.

- 1) Reduction of the hours of labor in proportion to the progress of production.
- 2) The United States shall obtain possession of the railroads, canals, telegraphs, telephones, and all other means of public transportation and communication; but no employee shall be discharged for political reasons.
- 3) The municipalities to obtain possession of the local railroads, ferries, water works, gas works, electric plants, and all industries requiring municipal franchises; but no employee shall be discharged for political reasons.
- 4) The public lands to be declared inalienable. Revocation of all and grants to corporations or individuals, the conditions of which have not been complied with.
- 5) Legal incorporation by the States of local Trade Unions which have no national organization.
- 6) The United States to have the exclusive right to issue money.
- 7) Congressional legislation providing for the scientific management of forests and waterways, and prohibiting the waste of the natural resources of the country.
- 8) Inventions to be free to all; the inventors to be remunerated by the nation.
- 9) Progressive income tax and tax on inheritances; the smaller incomes to be exempt.
- 10) School education of all children under 14 years of age to be compulsory, gratuitous and accessible to all by public assistance in meals, clothing, books, etc., where necessary.

11) Repeal of all pauper, tramp, conspiracy, and sumptuary laws. Unabridged right of combination.

12) Official statistics concerning the condition of labor. Prohibition of the employment of children of school age and of the employment of female labor in occupations detrimental to health or morality. Abolition of the convict labor contract system.

13) Employment of the unemployed by the public authorities (county, city, state and nation).

14) All wages to be paid in lawful money of the United States. Equalization of women's wages with those of men where equal service is performed.

15) Laws for the protection of life and limb in all occupations, and an efficient employers' liability law.

POLITICAL DEMANDS.

1) The people to have the right to propose laws and to vote upon all measures of importance, according to the Referendum principle.

2) Abolition of the veto power of the Executive (National, State and Municipal), wherever it exists.

3) Municipal self-government.

4) Direct vote and secret ballots in all elections. Universal and equal right of suffrage without regard to color, creed or sex. Election days to be legal holidays. The principle of proportional representation to be introduced.

5) All public officers to be subject to recall by their respective constituencies.

6) Uniform civil and criminal law throughout the United States. Administration of justice to be free of charge. Abolition of capital punishment.

CONSTITUTION.

I. MANAGEMENT.

The affairs of the Party are conducted by the National Executive Committee, the National Board of Grievances, the local Sections, the National Conventions, and by the general vote. At all elections a plurality vote is sufficient to elect; but an absolute majority is required to elect the seat of the National Executive Committee.

II. CONVENTIONS.

1. A National Convention of the Party shall be held every fourth year; when a presidential election takes place, but if five sections in three different States

demand it, a general vote shall be taken as to holding a special convention. A general vote shall decide as to the place of the convention; but the convention shall not be convened before the expiration of not less than eight weeks after publication of the official call.

2. Every Section having been attached to the Party for three months prior to the National Convention, and which has fulfilled all its obligations, is entitled to representation therein at the rate of one delegate for each 100 members or fraction thereof. Each delegate shall have only one vote. No Proxy delegates shall be allowed, but several Sections of the same State may combine to jointly send a delegate.

3. The expenses of delegates are borne by the Sections sending them. The expenses of the National Convention will be paid by the Party.

4. The National Convention frames the national platform, decides the form of organization, selects the seats of the National Executive Committee and Board of Grievances and investigates and decides all difficulties within the party.

5. All acts of the convention shall be submitted to the sections for general vote.

III. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

1. The National Executive Committee is composed of seven members, to be elected by the Section or Sections of the place selected as the seat of the committee. The Committee shall elect from its members a Financial Secretary, a Recording Secretary and a Treasurer.

The same Section or Sections shall also elect the National Secretary who shall also act as secretary for foreign affairs. He shall be a member of the Executive Committee, but with an advisory voice only.

It is the right and duty of the said Section or Sections to suspend any member of the National Executive Committee, including the National Secretary, may be guilty of any neglect of duty, to elect a temporary successor in place of such suspended member, and to submit such action with the reasons therefor to a general vote.

2. The members of the National Executive Committee shall be elected for the term of one year, but may be re-elected at the expiration thereof.

3. The National Executive has for its duty:

- To carry out the resolutions of the National Convention and those adopted by general vote.
- To supervise the agitation throughout the country.
- To establish proper relations and communication with the Socialist parties of other countries.
- To make all necessary preparations for the National Convention, and make a full report to the same on all party matters.
- To issue semi-annually and in a sufficient number of copies a report to the Party, stating definitely the condition of every Section and of the Party's finances. The Sections of the place selected as the seat of the committee shall elect an Auditing Committee, which shall have power at any time to inspect and audit the books and the funds on hand.

4. It is also the duty of the National Executive Committee -

- To receive any propositions which may be presented for general vote by any Section; they shall become binding if endorsed by a general vote of the Party within two months after issue of the call.
- To be represented in the National Convention by one of its members who shall have no vote, but merely an advisory voice in the proceedings and shall bear no other credentials.

- c. The National Executive Committee makes its own order of business.
- d. The National Executive Committee may compensate its officers, according to the labors performed by them, from the treasury of the Party.

IV. THE PARTY PRESS.

- 1. The National Executive Committee shall have control of the contents of the party organs.
- 2. The editors are appointed by the National Executive Committee from such comrades as shall be recommended for appointment by the convention. They cannot be members of the committee.
- 3. The National Executive Committee, shall give notice of discharge at least two weeks before the same is to take effect; the editors shall also be bound to give two weeks' notice of their intentions to leave their positions.
- 4. Any of the editors who may prove incompetent or violate the platform or constitution of the party may be forthwith suspended by the National Executive Committee.
- 5. Any editor who has been discharged by the committee shall have the right of appeal to the Board of Grievances.

V. BOARD OF GRIEVANCES.

- 1. The Board of Grievances shall be composed of seven members.
- 2. The duties of this Board shall be:
 - a. To settle all difficulties in the Party within four weeks after receiving the necessary evidence, the decisions to be at once communicated to the National Executive Committee; and to decide appeals in cases of expulsion.
 - b. From all decisions of the Board of Grievances, appeal may be taken to the general vote. The Sections must report the result of their vote to the National Executive Committee within six weeks; within two additional weeks the National Executive Committee must publish the result.
 - c. The Secretary of the Board of Grievances shall render a full report of the transactions of that Board during its term of office to the National Convention.
 - d. The Board shall declare vacant the seat of any of its members who shall have been absent from three consecutive meetings without sufficient excuse, and order the Section of its locality to fill the vacancy.

V. SECTIONS.

- 1. A number of persons may form a Section, provided they acknowledge the Platform, Constitution and Resolutions of the Party and belong to no other political party.
 - a. They shall report their organization as a Section to the National Executive Committee, and send a list of members and the dues for the current month.
 - b. Such new Section shall be deemed admitted to the party unless, within four weeks after its organization has been reported to the National Executive Committee, valid objections are urged against its admission by other Sections. The validity or groundlessness of any objection made to the admission of any new Section shall be determined by the National Executive Committee.
 - c. Each Section shall send every three months a report of its numerical and financial condition, also its progress and prospects, to the National Executive Committee.

- 2. Where it may be deemed advisable, several Sections may be formed in one city or town; but when more than one Section exists in any town, the several sections shall be bound by any resolutions adopted by a majority vote of the whole local membership regarding political action or questions of principle.
- 3. It shall be the duty of the several Sections existing in any one town to provide rules governing their joint action in matters to be acted on by the whole local membership.

- 4. Sections shall have jurisdiction over their own members.
- 5. Should a protest be entered against the admission to a Section, of any applicant for membership, a two-thirds vote of all present in the regular business meeting shall be necessary to admit him.
- 6. A majority of two-thirds of the members present at any business meeting shall be sufficient to expel any member.
- 7. Each Section shall hold a regular business meeting at least once a month.
- 8. The names of all persons applying for admission to the Party must be voted upon in a regular business meeting of the Section or Branch.

VII. LOCAL ORGANIZATION.

In any Section which is divided into two or more branches, all local business of the Section and dealings with the party's national management may be carried on by a Central Committee.

VIII. DUES.

- 1. The Sections levy upon each of their members a monthly tax to be paid monthly to the National Executive Committee. For local purposes the Sections may levy an additional tax according to their needs.
- 2. The dues shall be receipted for by stamps, to be furnished to the Section by the National Executive Committee.

IX. SECTION REGULATIONS.

- 1. Every Section elects from among its members an Organizer and such additional officers as it deems proper. The Organizer shall conduct the correspondence with the Executive, and he shall send an official report once every three months to the National Executive Committee; he shall send ten cents of the monthly dues of each member to the Executive; he conducts the local organization.
- 2. Every Section shall elect a Grievance Committee of three members, which shall investigate all charges and difficulties in the Section, and report its decision. Sections having a Central Committee may refer such investigations to said committee.
- 3. Charges against members shall not be debated until the Grievance Committee has thoroughly investigated the case and reported to the Section. All charges must be made in writing, whereupon the committee shall investigate the case and hear the witnesses of both parties. A detailed report of the investigation shall be drawn and laid before one of the next business meetings of the Section. The Section shall then decide the matter, and its decision be entered on the minutes. The minutes and all papers concerning the investigation, shall be delivered to the Secretary for safe keeping. The secretary shall inform the accused in writing of such decision.

All decisions of the Section may be appealed from to the Board of Grievances.
- 4. At every meeting a new Chairman shall be elected who shall observe the usual parliamentary rules.

5. Members who have withheld payment of their dues for more than three months shall be suspended from all rights until they have fulfilled their obligations.

6. Sick or unemployed members will be excused from payment of dues.

7. The result of every election within the Section must be communicated at once to the National Executive Committee.

8. In case of dissolution of any Section, all property of the same must be delivered to the National Executive Committee.

9. No section shall enter into any compromise with any other political party.

X. STATE ORGANIZATION.

Whenever there are three sections in any one State, they shall form a State organization. It shall be the duty of such State organizations to conduct a systematic agitation within their jurisdiction and form new Sections.

Every Section connected with a State organization must also be connected with the National organization.

MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS.

1. This constitution may be amended by the National Convention or by a general vote. A general vote may be called for by three Sections. Any proposition in the interest of the party submitted by three Sections shall be laid before the party by the National Executive Committee for a general vote. Within three weeks after the issuance of a call for a general vote, amendments may be proposed by any Section to any proposition so laid before the party, and such amendments shall then also be submitted to be voted on together with the proposition. The result of the vote must be reported to the National Executive Committee within eight weeks after the first call was issued.

2. The National Executive Committee shall forthwith transmit to the Sections a tabulated statement of the vote cast by each Section.

3. No person shall be nominated as a candidate for any public office unless he has been a member of the party for at least one year, and has identified himself with the party by active participation in its work. But this provision shall not operate against persons who have been publicly known as Socialists for five years, and are considered as such by members of the party.

4. All officers, boards or committees of the Party shall be subject to removal by their constituents (see Art. 3, § 1, as to the National Executive Committee).

5. In subscribing to the platform and constitution, the members take upon themselves the obligation to assist each other to the extent of their ability in case of need.

6. The National Executive Committee is directed (in order to bring about a uniform system of transacting business) to have proper financial books made to be furnished to the Sections at cost price.

7. The National Executive Committee shall immediately after the expulsion of any member publish the name of the expelled in the Party organ, and in its semi-annual reports give a list of the names so published.

8. All former provisions conflicting with this constitution are rescinded.

RESOLUTION.

Whereas, we recognize the necessity of carrying on the war against capitalism simultaneously on the political and economic fields, therefore be it

Resolved, that we recommend to all Socialists to join the organizations of the trades to which they respectively belong.